

Claremont Colleges Scholarship @ Claremont

CMC Senior Theses

CMC Student Scholarship

2019

Art's Truth: An Aid to Ethical Sensibility

Nova Quaoser

Recommended Citation

Quaoser, Nova, "Art's Truth: An Aid to Ethical Sensibility" (2019). *CMC Senior Theses*. 2123.
https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/2123

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont Mckenna College

Art's Truth: A Supplement to Ethical Sensibility

Submitted to
Professor Paul Hurley

By
Nova Quaoser

for
Senior Thesis
Spring 2019
April 29, 2019

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to my thesis reader Professor Paul Hurley for bearing with my terrible work ethic, my inability to say anything of coherence, and helping me design a project that has engaged and maintained my interest for an entire semester. Working with you has been a truly wonderful and humbling experience.

I'd also like to thank Matthew for those late-night releases, Kevin and Santi for their incredible support in designing monetary contracts to force me to write this god-awful thing, and to Nashi for her contributions of care, food, and for her brilliance in helping me think through my problems, thesis and otherwise.

A special special shoutout to Jack for helping motivate me and for his incredible wit and ability to talk philosophy for hours on end. My thesis would be severely impoverished without you.

To my family and all the other friends that dealt with me and checked me along the way of this intellectual inquiry, thank you so much for habituating me properly. I couldn't have possibly known what I was doing without your support and guidance.

Table of Contents

Introduction // 5

Deliberation // 7

Transformative Experiences // 16

Habituatation // 25

Personal Transformations // 31

Art as Personally Transformative Experience // 36

Conclusion // 42

Introduction

From the Joker to Norman Bates, vicious characters of the irrational kind seem to scare us the most - and for good reason. Lack of empathy, sheer hatred, or skewed worldviews reveal an apathy to the traditional reasons we value life, justice, and fairness. These characters exacerbate our moral sensibilities by undermining moral rules that we think are often universal, and when presented with reasons for acting differently they consistently deny and ignore their force. A crude response to this problem would assert that these individuals are simply beyond the reach of philosophy - that philosophy and its emphasis on reasons can only be for individuals with the appropriate starting character or for those who are 'rational' to begin with. This posits that philosophy's shortcomings reside in the accessibility of the form rather than its methodology and emphasis on deliberation.

Most would agree, however, that it's not only these vicious, irrational characters of bad moral dispositions that often fail to deliberate correctly. All of us have moral shortcomings of one or another that follow a similarly 'vicious' behavior of resistance to deliberation in even the most minute aspect of our lives. This asks if philosophy can only help with the parts of one's moral behavior subject to controlled thinking and deliberation. That is, the study of reasons in the philosophical methodology may only benefit those who have already begun deliberating reasonably at least in some parts of their moral conceptions.

In this paper I explore the philosophical implications of decision theory and deliberation on ethics, paying special attention to how vicious individuals yearn for a separate philosophical account. Drawing largely on Fricker, McDowell, Paul, and

Nussbaum I discuss how transformative experiences open a window for understanding moral development in terms of habituation in the Aristotelian sense, and further how the vicious individual's failure to deliberate may be remedied via a transformation through art.

Deliberation

Read almost any standard philosopher and the pathway to understanding their argument lies in their reasons. Reasons for caring about the poorest in our society or the importance of honesty seem to find force because they provide a framework for understanding why we *should* act in some way by virtue of agreed-upon principles, or – in the case of especially good philosophy – clever premises that fold into irrefutable conclusions. The philosophical canon relies on an understanding of ethics that follows a methodology that reasons via evidence and logic – an empirical view of ethics. The movement from a prior belief to the philosopher’s argued belief concerns itself with only one particular route, a route steeped in deliberation or controlled thinking. In the case of ‘vicious characters’ or individuals who do not find reason statements motivating, we can take several interpretations of different frameworks for understanding why.

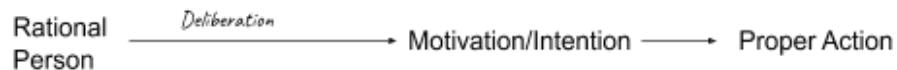
First, philosophy may be compelling on an internalist account. As outlined in Bernard Williams *Internal and External Reasons* paper, an internalist conception of motivating statements requires that any reason must be compelling for someone if the reason furthers a prior-existing motivation in their “subjective motivational set” (McConnell 95). The elements in such a set may be formally recognized as ‘desires’ but more elaborately understood as “dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects...embodying the commitments of the agent” (McConnell 96). For example, Paul has reason to give this student an A on his thesis because he believes it aligns with his motivation or his desire to reward good work. The process by which he begins to *believe* that a reason may be compelling is a deliberative one.

The crude view of the internalist account requires deliberation from these existing motivations. There can be a reason that indicates an agent should take action X but the agent may not realize that action X furthers a satisfaction or desire of some elements in their motivational set. Thus, the deliberative process of believing a reason is motivating relies on an unrestrictive sense of practical reasoning, that is involving a heuristic and imaginative reflection. Simply put, the process of forming beliefs crudely involves personal experiences, knowledge, and imagination. For example, one might come to understand roughly what heartbreak is like via having experienced heartbreak themselves, having seen the reactions elicited by those in heartbreak, or by imagining themselves in a situation of heartbreak. This isn't to say that the heuristic and imaginative aspects of deliberation are separate or defined as any more important than each other; rather, it's merely to characterize the deliberative process as involving both knowledge and imagination.

We might consider this deliberation to be quite complex from a psychological standpoint. The time-ordering of pre-existing motivations, the combination of them, or the individual weight of each motivation suggests that deliberation may quickly get messy from a psychoanalytic view. The imaginative aspects of deliberation also point to a view of practical reasoning that involves unconscious and intertwined socialized and biased processes - a result of being habituated in certain norms since birth - what Fricker calls "moral luck" (Fricker 33). This process of imagining an action, its outcome, and how it may act towards satisfying prior-existing motivations only serves to augment the deliberative route, not carve out new ones. While the internalist is quick to admit that deliberation quickly becomes entangled and unclear even for the individual parsing their

own motivations, the internalist account of deliberation requires that the individual “control” the “thinking by which one determines what one has reason to do” because this is preferable to a non-cognitive understanding of ethical deliberation (McConnell 97). Thus, when this deliberation leads astray it is because of a lack of reasons or a belief in particular reasons on the part of the agent. A methodology that emphasizes reasons in the internalist conception, however, still views their force as coming out of a controlled route of thinking or deliberative process no matter how complex.

The crude view of the internalist:



On this conception of belief formation, then, ideas and reasons are motivating only via deliberation, but this posits an unsatisfactory framework for understanding when deliberation fails for individuals. Imagine a character, of the Aristotelian variety, who maintains a vicious disposition by virtue of the fact that they deliberate without practical reasoning or the evidence-based explanations philosophy engages with. I use the term ‘vicious’ to denote a demeanor that does not epistemically value reasons and therefore fails to deliberate correctly. To be clear, viciousness, while normally having a negative normative connotation, purely indicates an inability to deliberate correctly, often for morally or epistemically inculpable reasons. That is, reasons have no motivating force towards their action precisely because their prior existing motivations don’t value any force these reasons might have. As Fricker elaborates, there are often circumstances where a “subject’s patterns of judgement are influenced by the prejudices of his day in a

context where it would take a very exceptional epistemic character to overcome those prejudices” (Fricker 33). In such a situation, it may be “simply too much to expect the subject to achieve awareness that a certain prejudice is structuring his social consciousness, let alone to realign his habits...accordingly” (Fricker 33). Fricker labels such an individual as having circumstantial epistemic ‘bad luck’ (Fricker 33).

If we take the internalist’s emphasis on deliberation, then, this viciousness in the epistemic sense will also often take on a moral feature. Vicious characters of the epistemic variety will also have a viciousness of the moral variety if we believe that moral conclusions are the subject of deliberation on the part of these individuals. In this way, we can understand this vicious character as having both ‘circumstantial’ epistemic bad luck and also what Nagel calls circumstantial *moral* bad luck (Fricker 33). To bring it home, this means that quite often there are ethical considerations that are reasons only for individuals whose internal reasons are suitably related to ethics - the idea being that an individual could be left cold by all of the reasons in the entire body of ethics if they are of a vicious character to begin with. The internalist response to this type of individual from a philosophical view suggests that, if only the individual had more reasons, believed the *right* reasons, or more generally began deliberating correctly, ethics - or any set of reasons previously unconvincing - would become motivating and result in proper action.

To make clear why this response is unsatisfactory, we can consider two types of vicious characters that pose a problem for deliberation. First, in a Fricker-style, we can imagine that an individual has the epistemic bad luck of being raised in a racist household or community. The habits and social norms of their upbringing limit their exposure to different conceptions of other racial groups, and as such this individual - let’s call them

Rory - remains staunchly racist for their whole life, ignoring factual and experiential evidence that contradicts their racist beliefs. As such, Rory has a viciousness of the first form - an *incapacity* to deliberate properly. Their incapacity can be the result of various factors such as identity, sentimental attachment, habituation, or simply apathy. I use the term 'incapacity' to indicate that Rory does not view what we might understand as 'evidence' as compelling. In the moral sense, then, as we might discuss about an individual with epistemic and moral bad luck, Rory cannot deliberate properly largely for reasons external to the deliberative process itself, which will become evident later.

A vicious character of the second form describes an individual with the *inability* to translate this deliberation properly or the *inability* to have deliberation, even if rational, help in forming a decision on the proper action. Individuals who accept that racism is wrong and attempt to reduce the effects of discrimination may still be prejudiced *despite* their beliefs and deliberation. That is, unlike Rory, an individual - let's call them Aubrey - could be deliberating rationally and seeing reasons as compelling but their deliberation remains skewed in ways that are non-deliberative. To be clearer, an individual with implicit biases may still see reasons as compelling but not as compelling or in the right framing that they should. While this is a *deliberative* issue, it cannot be solved via more deliberation - as I will show later. Furthermore, even if one does rationally deliberate, these biases may also undermine the link between deliberation and proper action in that it's not clear, even from deliberating properly, how to change the way this individual *perceives* via deliberation. Thus, the internalist has no response for how such an instance of *more deliberation* may help in any respect. I use the term 'inability' to indicate the problem viciousness poses for the link between deliberation and proper action given

someone's deliberation is sufficiently rational to begin with. Thus, the difference between the 'incapacity' to deliberate and the 'inability' to do so describes the difference between an irrational deliberator (incapacity) and a rational deliberator (inability). My dichotomizing of the rational and irrational deliberator along these lines isn't to posit this framework as correct but merely as an instrumental way to show later why the internalist and empiricist's view of morals and ethical deliberation fails.

I should also note that there are two distinct types of individuals with the inability to deliberate properly. The first, as has already been introduced, involves those with implicit biases against different groups who may not be able to effectively recognize the exercise of these biases. Even if recognition occurs, it's not clear that an individual can deliberate away these subconscious and imaginative processes via more reasons or the *right* reasons (which will become clear later). We could also consider another example of the *inability* to deliberate as not an issue with translating certain reasons properly but rather a limitation in experience. An individual who has never experienced love for example and firmly believes that love merely indicates a strong passion between two sexually compatible partners may never consider the type of reasons or experiences of love one may give as compelling for their deliberation on the issue. As is the case with childbirth, love, or Nagel's example of the bat, there are certain experiences that transcend both imagination and reasonable description, thereby being inaccessible to the faculties of deliberation no matter how rational.

The vicious character underscores how a transition from viciousness to considering the situation aright often cannot occur with just deliberation. The internalist conceives of deliberation as a function or algorithm by which an individual inputs various

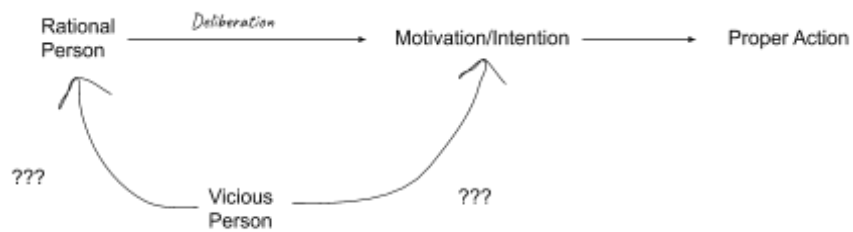
reasons and experiences on a deliberative route and its output describes an action or conclusion that aligns with pre-existing motivations. This then leads to proper action and proper perceptions of situations. However, even if we believe the deliberative route of the internalist, the ‘function’ of deliberation for the vicious character does not value reasons or experiences as they stand purely because their ‘function’ is *incapable or unable* of deliberating correctly, for the circumstances listed above. As such, the *transition* from viciousness to proper deliberation often cannot be just the product of deliberation. Put simply, one cannot begin deliberating rationally or correctly by way of more rationale or reasons. Deliberation itself may not be sufficient and thus the internalist’s response that a vicious character requires better deliberation or better/right reasons cannot be the case if deliberation in the most proper conception is itself impossible for the individual.

Our threshold for viciousness need not be so strict to still pose its issue for the internalist account. We could easily imagine a character who is only vicious in certain aspects of their deliberation or for specific topics. L.A. Paul’s account of experience denotes how humans “vary so much and so deeply that even small differences (contextually speaking) in experiences between people can prevent [one] from knowing what it is like to be a different type of person” (Paul 7). For example, dichotomies in developed versus developing societies, different stratifications of wealth, gender, race, and personal histories structure barriers to fully realizing what it may be like to be another person. As such, when it comes to reaching moral or epistemic conclusions, there may be a “deep and familiar fact that different subjective points of view, as different conscious perspectives, can be fundamentally inaccessible to each other” (Paul 8). Much like a vicious person cannot understand the deliberation of the ‘rational’ individual, the

reverse is also true. Where one may have prejudices and biases that can be deliberated upon in one sphere, an individual may also be likely to not deliberate properly in certain spheres for all the circumstantial reasons listed above. It's not just that practical reasoning can't bridge gaps of difference in experience; rather, it's more that this type of deliberation is not sufficient enough to "know what it is *really* like to be an octopus, or to be a slave, or to be blind" (Paul 8).

This means that most if not all individuals are vicious in some sense by virtue of the fact that they cannot deliberate to reach a place of full understanding of certain experiences and thus are not able to conclude properly on them. Again, I return to the previous example of the individual who has implicit biases, Aubrey. Such biases cannot be deliberated upon and any individual socialized or habituated in our current norms will have some biases, towards truth and particular interpretations of features of a situation. This isn't to say all biases are bad but that all individuals have them specific to their own experiences, for better or for worse. As a result, viciousness or a failure to deliberate remains present in all individuals if we acknowledge differences in experiences between humans, at some point and in some arena of thought. If any part of an individual's deliberation is vicious, the internalist account views this purely as irrational and unable to be affected by the type of reasons given in philosophy. Thus, the internalist account must grapple with not just individuals who are vicious in the holistic sense but also individuals who are vicious in any sense.

The internalist view with vicious persons:



Simply put, an individual who doesn't deliberate rationally cannot be swayed purely via reason to begin deliberating correctly, and, as I've shown, almost all individuals do deliberate viciously in some respect. This seems to suggest that under the internalist account philosophy is only accessible or effective for certain topics, the ones by which an individual deliberates properly upon (if one can even know that). The idea that philosophy can only help once we begin deliberating correctly seems to beg the question of how we may begin deliberating correctly at all if we are vicious in some respect to begin with. This transition from viciousness to virtuousness does happen; we see this change in ourselves and those around us all the time, so explaining such a drastic change, if it comes not from deliberation, must involve a separate process.

Transformative Experiences

Transitioning from viciousness to virtuousness seems to often involve what can only be understood as a transformation. This kind of transformation can either set you on track to have the ability to deliberate or to transform your actual motivations held or *both*. In the first case, this transformation can so fundamentally alter preferences and the reasons valued that one does begin to acknowledge reasons that were previously unconvincing, that is they begin to deliberate correctly. More interestingly, however, the second case transformation can shape an entirely new non-deliberative route to a moral conclusion. The change from deliberating incorrectly to seeing a situation aright can often be understood as a dramatic change in personal preferences, perception of the world, a fundamental shift in identity, a profound new way of imagining, or a new set of beliefs and motivations. So, for example, we could take the racist individual - Rory - from above and suppose they have never had an experience with an individual of another racial group. We could consider their deliberation transformed via multiple experiences with persons of other racial groups that fundamentally change their preferences. The individual suddenly begins to deliberate correctly and reasons that were previously unconvincing now become motivating because of the introduction of new information and a new ability to imagine. This type of transformation enables the individual to go from a state of viciousness to 'rationality' and thus come to the 'right' conclusion via deliberation. This type of transformative experience seems largely compatible with a tweaked internalist account that integrates the vicious individual.

However, as I plan to show, the racist individual may also have a transformative experience where his perceptions and his beliefs on the matter shift, not necessarily

because of an augmentation in a deliberative process but rather an augmentation of a non-deliberative process. Thus, where one transformative experience directly affects epistemic viciousness the other fundamentally reconstructs perceptions and the motivations they may elicit without deliberation.

Given this first and second case, we can draw upon L.A. Paul's distinction that transformative experiences are of two types: 'epistemically transformative' or 'personally transformative'. Her account posits that experiences teach us about the world and further give us knowledge that can only be gained via the experience itself. Despite her emphasis on decision theory and deliberation, I draw largely from her framework because it will usefully illustrate the power of transformation.

Epistemic Transformations

Frank Jackson's example of Mary, a woman who since birth has been living in a black-and-white room, poses an interesting thought experiment about an epistemically transformative experience. The example posits that even if Mary could, through the most advanced scientific methods today, understand the wavelength of the color red, its specific frequency, its interaction with other particles, its psychological effect on her, and even the way her irises might change in response to the color at the neurological level she would not understand what it would be like to see the color red. She could read all the textbooks on seeing red, consult all her color-world friends about what it might be like, and even watch her friends' reactions to the color red and yet she would still be in what Paul coins a "special kind of epistemic poverty" (Paul 10). That is, Mary, despite all these

crude approximations for the experience, would still not fully understand what it is like to see the color red without actually having the experience itself.

Mary's epistemic poverty describes her inability to have the knowledge or the imaginative pieces to deliberate properly. In this case, Mary cannot accurately speak to how the experience of seeing color may affect her specifically and subjectively. In the realm of deliberation, Mary remains impoverished before leaving the room in the sense that she cannot gain the knowledge or reasons by which she can judge the experience of seeing red; she can only gain this knowledge through the experience itself. Upon leaving the room, Mary "transforms her epistemic perspective, and by doing so,...transforms her point of view" (Paul 10). She gains the knowledge of what it's like to see color, the ability to imagine similar experiences of seeing colors, the ability to construct a future conception of seeing colors, and an ability to discern her preferences from her past memory of the experience. In this transformation, Mary has then gained the ability to suddenly "entertain certain contents", "understand things in a new way", and may even "gain new information" (Paul 11).

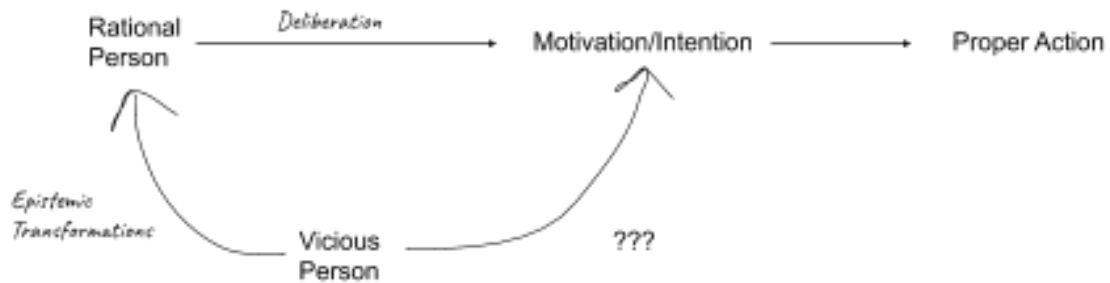
Mary undergoes an *epistemic transformation* by leaving the black-and-white room. Such an experience enables her to consider reasons that were previously inaccessible to her. Old reasons that were no longer compelling – imagine explaining the concept of a Rubik's cube to Mary before she leaves the room – now suddenly may become compelling. Not only has she gained new information, Mary can now fully comprehend, feel, and understand reasons that could have been only understood in the context of having the experience of leaving the room and seeing color. It's not that Mary was deliberating irrationally - we might say so from a perspective of having seen color -

but rather that she was acting viciously in the sense that she was *unable* to properly deliberate on the concept of color before her transformative experience, largely because she was in epistemic impoverishment; she had no relevant understanding of color. I use the term ‘relevant’ here to bring attention to the fact that Mary can know what color is and how it operates in various senses (scientific, emotional, etc.) without truly understanding its subjective or personal effect *on her*. Mary’s conception of color drastically takes on a new form she could not have predicted before the experience. Mary’s deliberative route becomes fundamentally changed by giving her new information and new abilities to augment her deliberation, making old reasons more compelling perhaps and helping her reach ‘better’ conclusions.

The *epistemic transformation* can fall in line with much of a tweaked internalist’s thinking. Mary’s experience transforms her perspective so as to enable her to begin deliberating correctly with respect to, say, completing the Rubik’s Cube. More clearly, if we remember the original internalist framework, Mary begins as a vicious person who becomes transformed into a ‘rational’ person on the topic of color by way of this epistemically transformative experience. As a ‘rational’ person, she then deliberates and comes to her conclusion via her reasons, preferences, and pre-existing motivations in what we might describe as a ‘correct’ way. This seems to be the natural internalist response that was mentioned earlier in this paper. New reasons and new information and new abilities of imagination augment a previously incorrect deliberation to allow the person to see the situation aright. Most straightforwardly, it seems clear that this is only one possible way of transforming a vicious person to a rational person, and at the very

least the less interesting proposition for understanding the problem viciousness poses for deliberation.

A tweaked internalist conception:



The epistemically transformative experience seems to raise more questions for the internalist account than it answers. At first, it seems that the examples of epistemic transformation do what the internalist needs: provides a fundamental piece of information, knowledge, or altering to imagination that enable the individual to begin deliberating properly. The nature of these types of epistemically transformative experiences, however, is that they cannot come about via philosophical reasons or explanation. They must be experienced firsthand or at the very least must have some subjective experiential component that cannot be transferred via the traditional philosophical reasons and arguments. The whole point of Mary leaving the room is that this type of experience is so subjective and experiential in nature that no inferential deliberation could supplement Mary's inexperience. She *had* to have that experience to deliberate accurately.

This raises two issues for a deliberative and empirical account of ethics. First, and more abstractly, what kind of answer does internalist philosophy give for supplementing an individual who lacks in certain basic and/or epistemically rich experiences? As it stands, the internalist must admit that the *only* way for this type of vicious person to begin deliberation correctly involves a fundamentally non-inferential and therefore non-philosophical process. Whether internalists choose to define this process generally as a reason or an expansion of deliberative ability, there is still a concern with how philosophy can do something so experiential for an individual if we view deliberation via reasons as the *only* way to understand motivated action. Secondly, and more immediately, does epistemic transformation solve all the issues associated with the failures of deliberation discussed earlier? As I will show with personally transformative experiences, there are still barriers to deliberation that are not addressed by purely epistemic transformations and the more interesting cases of transformation cannot be solved by deliberation.

Recall the earlier examples of viciousness where individuals are *incapable* of deliberation. In one example, the individual - let's call them Aubrey - recognizes the immorality of racism but still cannot realize their implicit bias or eliminate such unconscious processes by way of deliberation. In the other example, an individual - named Joey - believes in a particularly specific conception of love whereby their personal experiences have not given them the faculties to comprehend certain aspects we might deem critical to such a feeling. In the second case, the epistemic transformation provides a properly deliberative way for an individual to begin seeing the situation correctly. Once Joey does have an experience where they do fall in love (whatever this may be defined by

for them), we may consider Joey as having undergone an epistemically transformative experience in that they no longer are stunted in the ability to deliberate on actions concerning love; they no longer are in an ‘epistemic poverty’. Their viciousness turns to proper deliberation in the wake of having greater ability to imagine and understand the concept of love.

In the case of Aubrey, however, this isn’t the nature of their issue. Aubrey’s inability to deliberate stems not from an epistemic impoverishment; that is, Aubrey’s issue in deliberating isn’t a lack of knowledge. It’s that the type of motivated actions required to not be implicitly biased don’t result from deliberation. In fact, Aubrey’s actions display implicit biases that may occur despite their deliberation. Aubrey has already deliberated and concluded, let’s say, that racist actions and discriminatory behavior violates their morality and the way they are motivated to act; yet, the unconscious biases imbued in their interactions with others remains. They may say, interact, and imagine in accordance with these biases *despite* expressing intention and beliefs to the contrary. As such, an epistemically transformative experience won’t help Aubrey transform from viciousness to proper deliberation.

An internalist response to the issue posed by Aubrey might follow something like this: epistemic transformation would solve this deliberational issue in that Aubrey lacks the ability to imagine and conceive of racial groups properly, thus leading them to reiterate certain biases and discriminatory tendencies. This seems to miss the point by crudely dodging the real issue with Aubrey’s unconscious biases. First, it’s not clear that Aubrey *can’t* imagine an individual of another racial group in whatever way we might deem proper. This seems clear from Aubrey’s conclusion that racism does not fall in line

with their principles and that they ought to not be racist and discriminatory. It seems unlikely that Aubrey concludes that racism is a moral ill without being able to at least imagine an alternative conception of other racial groups that doesn't view them as inferior. This suggests that Aubrey can in fact imagine and does believe that those of other racial groups are in the relevant respects equal or the same as them-self. The issue more closely follows that Aubrey can and does imagine a person of a different race in the right way consciously but that her first *instinct* may be to imagine them improperly. Thus, there must be a process external to the simple act of having ability to imagine or to conclude that structures how we may act and what we may find motivating.

The issue brought about in Aubrey's case also extends to the first case of viciousness presented earlier - an *incapability* to deliberate. In this instance, an individual – Rory – inhabits a subtly different position to Aubrey. Rory has been so steeped in racist upbringings and a particular socialization that the force of reasons contrary to discrimination have been systematically undermined in their deliberation. Let us imagine further that Rory is perhaps the most vicious character with respect to racism. Despite repeated experiences with persons of other racial groups, Rory remains staunchly racist and reiterates their beliefs by spouting racist rhetoric and jokes. We could even imagine that one of Rory's close friends may be a person from another racial group, a quiet contradiction to the speech and actions of Rory's racism. To make such an individual perhaps more realistically possible, we might understand Rory's racism and his resulting viciousness on the issue to be a matter of various factors. Perhaps Rory's identity strongly links with the aesthetic and upbringing of his racist socialization. Perhaps Rory truly feels that individuals of other races are inferior and has never bothered to question

such an intuition. Perhaps positive reinforcement of these beliefs in the community incentivize Rory to ignore reason and remain vicious. Regardless, Rory's deliberation is so improper, so vicious, that an epistemically transformative experience will not result in a shift to proper deliberation. *Despite* the reasons and experiences Rory already has, Rory remains incapable of deliberating on such information because of the context of their deliberation - their socialization. More reasons, experiences, and even a better ability to imagine will not help change Rory's inherent motivation to ignore reason with respect to race.

Where does the internalist account tweaked for epistemic transformations then leave vicious individuals? We know that both Aubrey and Rory can change for the better, but it remains unclear by what process in a deliberative framework we can ascribe their change from viciousness to virtuousness. Even if we identify the process of this transformation, what is it that exactly changes? The question remains how individuals of the type represented by Aubrey and Rory may change their motivations when deliberation fails to be an avenue for that transformation, and further how philosophy may help.

Habituation

We might begin to understand what critically changes about Rory and Aubrey by analyzing what we intuitively grasp from changing our own behavior and the *habits* associated with them. Consider an individual who realizes they have a quick temper. By way of deliberation, they have concluded – let’s assume correctly – that the ease by which they become angry has become unhealthy and a hindrance to their self-growth. The simple act of concluding and coming to change one’s motivations don’t necessarily indicate that the person will begin to act differently. This doesn’t seem to be just a matter of incapability as I define it earlier but could also, as is the case with Aubrey, indicate an *inability* to act differently despite one’s deliberation. In the case of the individual with a quick temper, we might realize that the process of change is not as simple as a change of motivation and therefore a resulting action. Rather, the *habits* this person must develop inform how well their motivations lead to the proper actions. The person with a temper must begin to habituate properly when anger arises and start a *process* of conforming action to their conclusions and motivations. That is, the context of both deliberation and action play a monumental role in the interplay between these two processes. In an Aristotelian fashion, deliberation itself and its resulting motivations and actions cannot occur without the proper framing and context. It’s this *habituation* that seems to be a key external process that affects both deliberation and action.

While largely affecting deliberation, this process is decidedly the result of a non-deliberative effort or transformation. Of course, an individual can deliberate rationally to begin the process of re-habituating themselves away from vicious tendencies - much like Aubrey realizes they have implicit biases and wishes to change them; however, the

process of re-habitation itself does not involve inference or a deliberative route as the internalist understands it. The process of re-situating oneself seems more akin to strengthening and conditioning a muscle to perform a particular action, or muscle memory. The *habits* associated with how one engages in their practical reasoning and how those motivations result in particular actions cannot be another process of deliberation itself. We might think about imaginative habits, intuitions, and instincts as encompassing why the world may have external effects on our deliberation. The *way* in which we imagine things may not be so much a matter of content but rather how our imaginative view of a situation “marks off or determines...presenting elements that correspond to our view of what is to be pursued or avoided” (Nussbaum 77).

Namely, the salient features we may draw from a situation are more likely a result of how our cognition instinctually and intuitively tends to recognize and focus on particular details over others. The structure of what we perceive and therefore emphasize in our deliberation is “noninferential, nondeductive” and often shaped simply by our upbringing (Nussbaum 74). The repeated experiences Aubrey might need to unlearn her biases - or which features they focus on in their imagining of an individual from another racial group - don’t matter by way of conveying more information to Aubrey; rather, these experiences may perform what should be understood as a sensitization process where Aubrey can evolve their perception or imagination to better choose salient features instinctually. Rory’s vicious habituation involves undermining certain elements as important and recognizing others as compelling reasons for an identity, belief system, and worldview that are problematic. As such, Rory’s picking and choosing of salient features *can* involve deliberation but in the imaginative and intuitive sense it seems that it most

likely doesn't. As Aristotle posits, this imaginative intuition and instinct can best be described as a sort of 'practical wisdom' borne out of having many experiences, not important for their ability to provide new information or abilities but rather for their role as sensitizing one to the right instinctual *recognition* of important elements in a situation.

A Better Framework: Fricker's Perceptual Judgement

We can adapt Fricker's framework for judgement in understanding testimonial injustice to more clearly hone in on my usage of the Aristotelian ideas of moral training and perception. Fricker outlines five principles in the virtue ethic tradition that follow the framework I plan to use. In this section, I will touch upon only three of the principles to make the rudimentary framework clear.

First, Fricker's "model for judgement is perceptual, and so non-inferential" (Fricker 72). For such a framework, the virtuous agent is distinguished by a "capacity for moral perceptual judgement" (Fricker 72). That is, the agent's socialization and upbringing have enabled them to view the world in "moral colour" and discern the "morally salient features of the situation confronting them" in the proper way (Fricker 72). The virtuous agent thus does not need to deliberate in the classical sense when faced with a moral dilemma. They merely *see* the situation initially as requiring a certain judgement and response when presented in the proper way, and this results in a perceptual judgement that is both "spontaneous and unreflective" (Fricker 72). This points us to a "model for non-inferential judgement" that best describes how the process of seeing a situation aright may evolve from a non-deliberative route.

Secondly, Fricker argues two more principles: that perceptual judgement can be both motivating and rationally justified. Moral perception on her account are “intrinsically motivating” in that seeing a situation through a moral lens calls for “one or another practical response from relevant parties” (Fricker 77). That is, the salient features one recognizes immediately causes an unreflective judgement of a situation that then implies a proper response or action. If Aubrey virtuously perceives their action in a situation to be unjust, bias, or bad, they are - from the moment of judgement - motivated to change their action to a response that they perceive to be proper. Furthermore, if Aubrey’s perception of the situation is virtuous, they have good *reason* to perceive and believe what they do about the situation via the salient features recognized; that is, they are justified rationally in their judgement by the actual elements and context of the situation they recognize. These salient features are reasons then in a non-deliberative route. The facts to be perceived in a situation through a proper moral lens construct a concept of non-deliberative reasons; reasons that lead to motivations but not through inference or argumentation. Fricker takes this a step further by relying on McDowell’s elaboration that “if [actions] manifest a virtuous person’s distinctive way of seeing things, they must be explicable...in terms of exercises of that perceptual capacity, which need no supplementing with desires to yield a full specification of reasons” (McDowell 77).

So, not only are perceptions both motivating and justified by reasons, there need not be a reliance on desire for something or weighted values placed on various items in one’s subjective motivational set to have reasons for taking a particular action. If perceptual judgement is then structured by our environment and how we are raised - the

salient features we have been socialized and have made habit to recognize - we can finally find space for what might be external reasons in the development of proper moral and epistemic sensibilities. Thus, we can shirk the problematic internalist account for one that offers the vicious person an answer to their viciousness that doesn't involve simply labeling them as irrational.

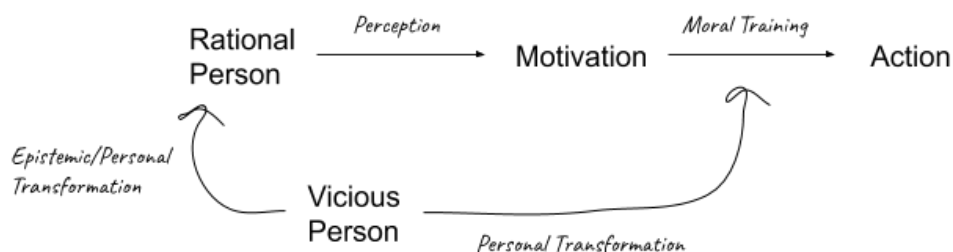
Perception and Moral Training

Using Fricker's framework, vicious persons like Rory and Aubrey exhibit the need for proper re-habitation in both perception and moral training. Perception, as Fricker indicates, describes the salient features of a situation that we recognize and emphasize in the proper way. That is, in the non-deliberation of judgement, our perceptions focus on and derive reasons from the context and details of the situation; thus, we can understand perception as the route parallel to the internalist route of deliberation to motivation. It is responsible for helping conceive of motivations and preferences. The link between motivation and action, however, - an issue elucidated by the individual with a bad temper - denotes a second part of re-habitation that involves a process of reiterated and habituated *action*. The processes that shape one's habits of action are what Fricker coins from Aristotle as "moral training" or "habitation by way of practice and example" (Fricker 81). While these may not be the exact same manner in which Aristotle used these terms, I move to define these two processes under habituation as two distinct but connected issues when we understand personal transformations. Thus, habituation or "ethical sensibility" encompasses two key ideas about the changes needed for Rory and Aubrey: a change in their perception - the morally salient features

recognized as motivating reasons - and a reshaping of their moral training - the habits of action in response to these motivations (Fricker 82).

We should also note that Fricker believes that “ethical sensibility.... [involves] at least two distinct streams of input: social and individual — in that order” (Fricker 82). The social coming first in the sense that individuals become inculcated in the ethical tradition of their communities and their environments first before individual re-habitation. Fricker then opens the possibility that training of these ethical sensibilities on the individual input can occur through experiences: “ethical responsibility demands that the individual generate an appropriate critical link between the traditional moment in which she gains her primary ethical socialization and *the experiences that life offers her* — experiences which may sometimes be in tension with her ethical socialization so as to *prompt critical reflection on the sensibility* which she has otherwise simply inherited” (Fricker 82). This is critical to my argument. Where Fricker means personal and individual experiences lay the foundation for understanding re-habitation and reflection on training of the ethical sensibilities, I am arguing that the first input - the social - may also be an external source for a critical reflection on habituation for the individual. The question remains as to how these experiences may occur and what they look may like more clearly.

A model for non-inferential judgement:



Personal Transformations

L.A. Paul's framework for understanding transformative experiences describes a personally transformative experience as one that "*can* change who you are, in the sense of radically changing your point of view" (Paul 16). More specifically, these experiences change "what it is like for you to be you...your personal preferences, and perhaps even change the kind of person that you are or at least take yourself to be" (Paul 16). The shock of a radically and subjectively transformative experience may alter the things you care about, the values you have, and how you deliberate. In this sense, the personally transformative experience doesn't just give you new reasons; it drastically alters how you see yourself, your values, and old reasons.

Personally transformative experiences don't necessarily need to be epistemically transformative as well, but they often are. Experiencing a situation that can only be truly felt by having the experience firsthand often does have the effect of being personally transformative. We might consider experiences like childbirth, particular traumatic events such as the death of a child or parent, religious conversions, new sensory abilities, and falling in love as often inducing personal and epistemic transformations. Paul sees these types of experiences - that are both epistemically and personally transformative - as "crossroads in your path towards self-realization" in that such experiences shape how you conceive of your place in the world and what context you may bring - the bedrock of an identity (Paul 17). Thus, these types of experiences are, from a philosophical perspective, of immense interest. Paul's framework for transformative experiences not only purely applies to transformative decisions but also still heavily relies on deliberation as a fundamental conception of why and how individuals act in the way they do.

I draw on Paul's framework to make explicit what I think must be implicit in her discussion of personally transformative experiences. Although Paul doesn't seem to mention in her deliberative framework perception or moral training in the Aristotelian sense, her discussion of personally transformative experiences suggests the type of habituation shifts we as philosophers may be interested in given Fricker's framework. Yet, Paul's discussion of how personally transformative experiences "[change] your subjective value for what it is like to be you, and [change] your preferences about *what matters*" assumes the ideal rational agent (Paul 17). If we approach this "what matters" as involving how one perceives the salient features of a situation, however, the personally transformative experience seems to do what the vicious person needs; it fundamentally alters the features you emphasize and recognize and thus begins the process of re-habitation. We can imagine how the experience of falling in love may transform an individual personally in that features of a relationship such as sex, companionship, and other aspects of care take on a more substantial and fulfilling role. The old reasons take on a new light via a drastically altered perception and therefore result in a new judgement of certain features.

These new judgements don't seem to be choices for the transformed individual; yet, Paul's framework seems concerned with a picture of "realistic normative decision theory" where "you experience yourself as a located, conscious self with control over who you are and how you evolve by making choices, at each experienced present, to perform or avoid particular acts" (Paul 19, 106). As Fricker and McDowell indicate, however, one's preferences about what matter or 'who you are' are often not up to you. This seems to be the whole force of Fricker's examples on circumstantial bad luck.

External reasons do weigh in on how you decide what matters and even how you begin to comprehend the features you can recognize as being up for consideration.

Paul admits her consideration of transformative experience happens in a framework of “realistic normative decision theory”, a theory of how individuals *ought* to deliberate (Paul 19). That is, it ignores the role of socialization in determining those preferences because this seems to be too descriptive rather than normative. Thus, Paul’s defense of normative decision theory is that in an *ideal* world we should consider the decision theory as the proper framework for how humans *should* make decisions and come to be motivated by reasons. While I do believe that Fricker and McDowell would disagree by indicating that the model of non-inferential judgement is not purely descriptive - it also seems to be normatively better - my project here is not to prove such. Regardless of this point, my main exploration is to ask whether, given a realistic model of human ethical development, philosophy is capable of providing the reasons and experiences to transform the vicious into the virtuous. Thus, I will use a *descriptive* framework for understanding transformative experiences rather than a *normative* one as Paul does. Therefore, as I have shown, the non-inferentialist model steeped in Aristotelian virtue ethic tradition seems to be the most accurate and descriptive for addressing the problem posed by vicious persons.

Transformation as a Process

Transformative experiences often don’t transform instantaneously; re-habitation may often involve a *process*. Much like concluding to a particular motivation doesn’t ensure an agent properly acts, personally transformative experiences often don’t

instantaneously ‘transform’ you from viciousness to virtuousness. Unlike, say, a religious conversion that suddenly transforms you into finding spiritual elements as compelling reasons, personally transformative experiences can shock you into realizing that you need to re-habituate yourself for motivations and reasons you may already find compelling.

Consider the case of Aubrey. Aubrey’s transformative experience could have transformed them personally by showing them the effect and extent of their biases but more importantly the need to begin re-habituating themselves. One example that most realistically comes to mind involves a repeated encounter with a person from another racial group, whereby an assumption Aubrey makes reveals to them and the person of interaction that Aubrey holds certain biases. For example, Aubrey assumes a characteristic of a person based on their race, and the affected person responds with strong emotions. The situation becomes heated and Aubrey - an individual who prides themselves on an identity of treating others equally - has been deeply affected for unintentionally causing harm and discomfort. This experience becomes transformative personally if it helps Aubrey realize where they went wrong in emphasizing a certain feature incorrectly - changing their perception - but also in that it may indicate to them a need for a type of moral training - the exercise of their ethical sensibility by having repeated interactions with persons of other racial groups. Aubrey can now involve a process of re-habituating themselves because an experience has transformed their perception, and in transforming their perception transforms their judgements and subsequent responses.

As is the case with childbirth, death of family members, religious conversion, and other transformative experiences, personally transformative experiences are often

moments of change and deeply specific to the individual; they seem to be outside the realm of our influence in inducing them. It may be that both Rory and Aubrey may live their entire lives with circumstantial bad luck in that they may never have the personally transformative experiences needed to re-habituate them from viciousness to virtuousness. This poses a question of how philosophers and society, in general, can help the vicious become the virtuous. As I discussed with Fricker earlier, Fricker believes that critical reflection of one's habituation must involve the individual and their subjective experience, but this doesn't necessarily rule out the possibility of society positing a similar experience that retains its specificity to the individual while still providing much-needed personal transformation. More clearly, I ask if the social input in Fricker's conception of ethical sensibility can also be responsible for intentionally helping individuals critically reflect on their habituation.

Art as Personally Transformative Experience

If we assume a model for moral judgement that is non-inferential – a model of the type Fricker outlines – it becomes clear that proper perception and moral training can only come about via practice and example; that is, as Miranda Nussbaum describes, “a matter of learning” or instruction of “the right sort of vision of the concrete” (Nussbaum 160). By concrete, Nussbaum indicates that moral development must involve “a respect for the irreducibly particular character of a concrete moral context and the agents who are its components” (Nussbaum 162). Fricker also adopts this idea in her framework that “good judgement is uncodifiable” and that “no set of rules could capture in advance the educated improvisations of a virtuous moral perceptual sensitivity” (Fricker 73). Furthermore, any codification of rules for moral development and action must follow “after the fact of virtuous judgement” (Fricker 73). This is all to prove that moral development must involve instruction of the sort that retains the flexibility and improvisation that proper moral judgement calls for. More specifically, moral “progress comes not from the teaching of abstract law but by leading the friend, or the child, or the loved one - by a word, by a story, by an image - to see some new aspect of the concrete case at hand” (Nussbaum 160). That is, moral progress must pay close attention to the rich detail and complexity of actual life and what it’s like to *exercise* proper moral sensibility.

In its need for exercise and specificity, moral progress must involve experience of the sort that invokes a concrete application of ethical sensibility. As Nussbaum elaborates:

“a person armed only with...general principles and rules...would, even if she managed to apply them to the concrete case, be insufficiently equipped by them to *act rightly in it*. It is not just that the standing terms need to be rendered more precise in their application to a concrete text. It is that, all by themselves, they might get it all wrong; they do not suffice to make the difference between right and wrong” (Nussbaum 156)

Thus, general rules and abstract laws cannot help the individual without virtuous perception in that the reasons emphasized in such abstract laws will not be recognized properly in moral situations and therefore cannot help result in proper judgements. Without proper perception, one cannot discern reasons effectively, and applying general rules to specific situations will fail to follow good moral sensibility.

Nussbaum argues that in a dearth of actual experience art can do what abstract treatises cannot; it can help us exercise our moral sensibilities through imagination. Art elicits our “moral attention” and “calls forth our active sense of life, which is our moral faculty” (Nussbaum 162). Nussbaum posits that through our imagination we can begin to perceive as if we were doing so in an actual concrete moral dilemma. That is, “the characters’ emotions, their stirred intelligence, their moral consciousness, become thus, by sufficiently charmed perusal, our own adventure” (Nussbaum 162). We can further understand that it’s not the ability to imagine a situation from its plot that comes in handy for experiential knowledge gained through art but rather the construction of an imaginative vista to explore the *interactions* between the situation’s elements and its characters. This is merely to point out that thought-experiments of the variety used by philosophy cannot replace the imaginative aspects of literature and film. If this were the case, all novels, paintings, and films could induce the same effect by describing their

technical plot points or features. It would be absurd to describe the effect and experience of many great novels or films like Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* or the Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski* by their plots largely because nothing of great action really happens.

Art has a profound and unique ability to personally transform us. If we recall, the personally transformative experience transforms our perception and moral training, by allowing us to start a process of critically reflecting on our habituation and ethical sensibility. That is, personally transformative experiences remove us from our natural habituation and shock us into what that is like, having the effect of fundamentally changing our worldview and who we think we are. As Nussbaum argues, art exhibits the same capacity for removing us from our current habituation via imagination:

“When we examine our own lives, we have so many obstacles to correct vision, so many motives to blindness and stupidity...A novel, just because it is not our life, places us in a moral position that is favorable for perception and it shows us what it would be like to take up that position in life. We find here love without possessiveness, attention without bias, involvement without panic...it does not seem far-fetched to claim that most of us can read [a work of art] better than we can read ourselves” (Nussbaum 162)

While we may still need some prior experiences to even begin to approach certain works of art for the moral truth they may have, art can act as the personally transformative experience we need to critically re-evaluate our habituation in that it removes us from our current habituation and biases in its exercise.

Furthermore, art maintains the deeply personal and subjective nature required of actual personally transformative experiences. As described earlier, moral communication

“partakes both of the specificity and of the emotional and imaginative richness of [one’s] individual moral effort” (Nussbaum 153). Art differs from instruction of abstract rules, in utilizing the individual’s own faculties of perception and moral sensibility and remains specific to them. The individual can only draw upon their own specific experiences, sensibility, and perception to become transformed personally by a work of art; that is, the individual can only exercise *their* own imagination to remove themselves from *their* habituation. They cannot be told the effect of art and having it be transformative; they must *experience* it via their own lens and processes. Therefore, the art itself holds a unique and deeply distinctive relationship with the individual transformed.

The empiricist may respond by indicating that there is no restriction on art in its construction of moral truths and in how it may transform vicious individuals. I entirely agree that art can mislead and transform an individual for the worse, or towards less proper moral sensibilities. To believe that art has no burden of faithfulness to some form of proper perception, however, characterizes art as a purely “rootless relativism” (Nussbaum 155). Much like there may be flawed philosophy, art may also fail to “be responsively alive and committed...to the evolving narrative, to the laws and constraints of the genre and its history” (Nussbaum 155). That is, “artists...are not free to simply create anything they like” (Nussbaum 155). The greatness in their work resides in how the art may elicit an experience that in some way “renders reality, precisely and faithfully” (Nussbaum 155). This doesn’t mean that art presents reality as it is in the clearest sense of, say, a non-fiction technical account of an event, a photograph or a hyper-realistic painting but rather that it *represents* some key aspects of the human experience by capturing such elements in the imagination. A fictional account of a moral

dilemma may capture the interactions and moral questions at stake better than a non-fiction account by virtue that its use of the imagination renders a moral truth more clearly than a purely technical summary. That is because art *emphasizes* and helps draw out the salient features of a situation via our imagination it may help us grow our own sensibilities of perception as well. While this doesn't fully answer the empiricist's skepticism of how good art may come to be justified, I pose that what makes distinguishing good from bad art realizes the truly powerful aspects of art; that it is hard to verify the correctness of something at a general level that remains so specific and personal in its impact at the individual level. How we may reconcile art's subjectivity with philosophy's emphasis on justification seems to be an important question that I don't have good answers for. An inquiry of this kind would be an invaluable continuation of this paper and I know that others have and will continue to provide compelling answers on that question.

Such an emphasis on art and experience in moral development begs the question of how philosophy may be relevant, if at all. Could we have done away with this entire paper and all of its commentary for a series of quotations from various novels or clips from a film? Is there any room left for the impact of philosophical inquiry or criticism on moral progress? I argue that philosophy fundamentally supplements our experiences and our adventures in art. Without philosophical commentary, the relations between moral truths presented in varying forms of art and experience would have no way of "sketching" itself out (Nussbaum 161). Great works of art provide great moral truths and often can be personally transformative but even such experiences do not "set [themselves] besides other conceptions of moral attention and explain [their] differences

from them” (Nussbaum 161). For this reason, philosophy holds a unique position to compare, to humbly accept its limitations for influencing moral progress but to still offer “an outline that directs us to [the] salient features of our moral life”, using art and experience as the bread and butter of its instruction (Nussbaum 161).

Conclusion

Philosophy has immense power to sway and reveal important insights about the world, its moral truths, and ourselves, but its emphasis on empiricism and a strict ‘objective’ justification of its reasons renders it both ineffective and inhuman. Instead of an empirical view of ethics, I believe that a non-inferential model of moral judgement akin to Miranda Fricker’s framework for understanding testimonial injustice provides a more realistic and human approach to the issue of flawed moral sensibility. Furthermore, the nature of human difference naturally breeds a viciousness in all of us to understanding personal and subjective experiences as we should. This transition from viciousness to virtuousness presents an opportunity, a gateway, into understanding personal transformation through art. It’s faithfulness to the specificity and complexity of moral situations and its deeply personal effect reveal it as a medium of human expression that can provide both guidance and transformation on matters of perception and moral training. Thus, I recommend that philosophy supplement its arguments at its most basic level with references and instruction that involves experience. Art should play a critical role in our philosophical discourse in that it elicits our sensibilities rather than merely explains and defines them. Rather than relegate it to a secondary position of priority – a position that normatively asserts art as both epistemically and morally less relevant than philosophical papers – I argue that philosophy should most directly concern itself as a guiding supplement to art, rather than the other way around. Philosophy seems at its best when it combines and compares the truths we may derive from experience and art and discusses them in an inquiry that engages our emotions, that forces us to grapple with our realities in ways to make us not only know the right sensibilities but to *feel* them as well.